

## Editorial: ISOLP

# Do we Truly Require an International Society for LCA Practitioners?

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Recent discussions within the board of the Society for the Promotion of LCA Development (SPOLD) and at the LCANET workshop sponsored by the European Community in Nordwijkershout, The Netherlands have demonstrated a growing awareness of the important role of practitioners in the field of LCA. At the same time, in contrast to the organization of the LCA sciences (SETAC and SETAC-Europe), that of LCA in industry (SPOLD) and in standardization (ISO), it has become evident that this important group does not yet have a public mouthpiece or organization (at least not internationally).

Why is it so important that such practitioners join together in an international organization? Basically, these practitioners alone are actually aware of what can and what cannot be performed in LCA. How sound (i.e. valid and feasible) practices, for instance, can be developed within the framework which is presently being created by ISO (see pages 2–10). The conventions which are required for allocation and similar topics, on the other hand, cannot be solved through science alone, but instead demand a social affirmation. A society representing the majority of practitioners would have the mandatory authority for proposing conventions which could finally enter into future improvements of the ISO 14040 series. Neither science nor industry and standardization bodies alone are able to do this. Aside from these and similar technical questions, there are other important questions of ethics and sponsor-practitioner relationships which affect all LCA practitioners throughout the world and should therefore be addressed by this prospective society.

This editorial represents a first attempt for starting an open discussion. Laurent GRISEL and Bo WEIDEMA have also contributed a short statement related to this topic (see box). Please take an opportunity to read this paper and respond as soon as possible with your comments and suggestions so that we may publish an evaluation of the answers in the next issue.

We would especially like to hear your opinion concerning possible members (individuals and/or firms), important topics and duties, the possible structure, the inclusion or exclusion of related or complementary techniques, etc.

As the Editor-in-Chief of this Journal, I would be delighted to see this Society become a reality and – in the name of

Mrs. Almut Heinrich and ecomed publishers as well – I propose that this Journal become the official organ of the Society. Since we are planning to enlarge the size of this Journal to 6 issues per year in 1998, the additional space required for this purpose should not cause any inconvenience to our contributors.

### Call for the Creation of a Professional Association of LCA Practitioners

To date, LCA practitioners have been meeting in SETAC to discuss the development of methodology and in ISO working groups to discuss standardisation. However, as the market for LCA groups, and with the ISO standards being nearly finished, a new kind of organisation is needed. As a scientific organisation, SETAC is not the most obvious place to discuss such issues as a “code of conduct”, guidelines for critical review or an accreditation system for practitioners. These issues of expertise and social practice are arising from the daily work of practitioners and should be separated from methodology development and research programmes.

We therefore propose the set up of a professional organisation for LCA practitioners to deal with issues such as

- ethical code of conduct for practitioners
- guidelines for critical review
- accreditation scheme for practitioners
- standard contracts between practitioners and clients.

These only represent a few examples from some of the more urgent issues which may be dealt with.

We imagine an international association, since professional ethics and LCA *per se* are not limited by any boundaries.

If you agree with the need for a professional association for LCA practitioners and are interested in taking part in further discussions on how to set up the organisation, please send your opinions to the Int.J.LCA and mark your letter “Association”. You will then be informed of further initiatives.

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